Hepatitis 2 vols

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Essay on Hepatitis

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An Inaugural Essay
on
Hepatitis

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The subject of this Essay may be divided into the following heads,

I A short anatomical description of the Liver

II A History of the remote predisposing and exciting causes of Hepatitis

III A detail of the symptoms of this disease

IV The treatment adapted to the different States of this disease

It is unnecessary for me to enter into an anatomical description of the liver or its functions in the animal Oconomy, the first is too well known, to require elucidation and the latter I consider has eluded the research of men incomparably more adequate, to the task than I can have any pretensions to with little success, I will therefore leave this subject to those who have more leisure and,

abilities than I am blessed with to speculate on this great desideratum in Physiology.

I will therefore merely mention it as a viscus of considerable magnitude situated in the right Hypochondriac and partly in the Epigastric and left Hypochondriac regions, subject to various forms of disease; ~~[illegible]~~ to enter into a detail of which, would be foreign to my intention. I will therefore confine myself to those states commonly denominated Hepatites acute and chronic.

And first the acute, its remote predisposing ~~and~~ exciting and proximate causes

I shall offer a few cursory observations on each of those causes, in the order in which I have arranged them. To enter into the minute investigation of these, would far exceed the limits prescribed for this paper

I have mentioned remote causes in conformity with the generality of writers, yet I consider with Professor Rush, remote causes however numerous they may appear, to be all a Unit, comprehended under the appellation of Stimulants. I will enumerate a few of those which are generally supposed, to act in the production of this disease, with a few Observations on their nature and Modus Operandi, In those particulars I shall be very brief, for a more full investigation of these, I must refer to those Gentleman, who have treated this disease, particularly Fz. Dr Clark. Saunders &c &c

Among the numerous remote causes of this disease are, 1st. Affections of the mind particularly Anger. Long protracted summer heat. Intemperance in the use

of spirituous liquors, external violence, from falls, Intermitting and remitting fevers heat and cold alternately applied to the body, and lastly Miasmata, this I believe to be the most frequent cause of this disease, particularly in warm countries, where it is peculiarly Endemic.

There is no part of the World, with the Medical history of which we are acquainted, that this form of disease is not found to prevail, but more particularly so, on the coast of Coromandel, in the East Indies, and in the adjoining country, which is extremely warm, the temperature being seldom less than 90° and from that to 100° the surface of the Earth is generally covered with a white sand, and thinly clothed with vegetables.

These affections are peculiarly severe on

sailors and Europeans until they become habituated to the irregularities of the climate or to use the words of Dr Rush until they have undergone their seasoning. The excessive heat of the climate acting powerfully on those persons from milder latitudes, produces indirect debility, to this debility succeeds a general torpor of the system, and from the peculiarities of the circulation of the liver, which is remarkably slow, being computed only one 25th part as quick as in other veins of the same diameter, it is more liable to participate in this general torpor than any other viscus of the body, Dr Saunders says very properly there is one principal of action in common to all the remote causes, and that consists in inducing a state of excitement in the circulation of the liver. Dr Saunders might have gone further

and said (as I have before remarked) that the remote causes of all disease have but one principle of action, by Stimulant, The persons who visit those climates, do not become affected with this disease, till after sometimes residence, I would suppose in those cases, the excessive heat, acting on the increased excitability of those persons from milder latitudes, induces indirect debility, to this succeeds a general torpor of the system and particularly of the vessels of the liver from the peculiarities before remarked. This I would consider as a predisposing cause of this disease, to this succeeds an increase of excitability which leaves the system liable to be acted upon generally and the liver particularly, by any irregularities in the application of the ordinary stimuli of life, which in this susceptible state of the system act

as exciting causes, The proximate cause I take to be, an increased and irregular action of the bloodvessels of the liver, primarily and the whole of the sanguiferous system secondarily. Here I cannot avoid mentioning the advantages we derive from abandoning Nosology and applying our remedies according to the state of the system, as in the predisposition to Hepatitis, if we abstract, stimulus by gentle bleeding or purging we thereby relieve the system from a state of depression, and prevent inflammation. In concurrence with a warm climate, intemperance in the use of spirituous liquors, is a frequent remote cause of this disease, this powerful agent in the production of disease, seems to act specifically on the liver, as is fully proven from the dissections of intemperate persons, the liver being

found changed in colour consistence &c,
where there is a hepatic predisposition they
may act as both remote and exciting causes,
but more frequently the stimulus of those
liquors induce the predisposition, before alluded
to, from their long continued and excessive
action, when from either the accumulation
of excitabelity, to that point where the ordi-
nary stimulants induce disease, or from the
application of an exciting cause, a violent
reaction takes place, constituting this form
of disease. Miasmatic exhalations I
have said, was one of the most frequent causes
of this disease, this fruitful source of calamity
is often determined with all its force upon
the liver, inducing depression, debility and
consequent inflammation, why this cause should
particularly induce disease in the liver, is

explained by the principles before advanced

Symptoms of acute Hepatitis

This disease is generally preceded by chills and subsequent increase of heat, with a quick tense pulse mostly synochus — sometimes natural, pain in the right Hypochondriac region, pain in the right shoulder when the right lobe is affected et vice versa — Diarrhoea with green stools; costiveness; colic, swelling and hardness of the gums, an inability to sneeze, though acrid stimulants be applied to the nose,, constant head ache, constant sweatus, a numbness in one or both arms or lower extremities frequently occurs, a sense of pulling when lying on the left side, sometimes the pain is in the left side, this is said to occur most frequently in women —

sometimes there is an absence of pain except from pressure — diminished Urine, but high coloured, great watchfullness and occasional, delirium, the symptoms vary according to the parts of the liver affected, if the ligamentous parts are affected, which are said to be insensible when sound, and acutely sensible when diseased, the pain is very acute, high fever and quick pulse, If that part of the liver be affected, which is more immediately contiguous to the diaphragm, it gives rise to difficult respiration and dry frequent cough. This disease terminates, by resolution, suppuration and Scirrhous, an — engorgement of the vessels, has been mistaken for a termination in gangrene, The symp— —toms of suppuration are frequent chills — increase of fever particularly in the afternoon

, disposition to sweat and other symptoms of Hectic, the pus when formed may be discharged 1st by the biliary ducts. 2nd by the Stomach 3rd by the colon, 4th by the lungs, from the liver adhering to the diaphragm 5th by the Psoas abscess, 6th Externally, when the abscess points externally, it is recommended by Dr Clark, to discharge the pus by incision as death is almost invariably the consequence of a spontaneous opening internally, By an external opening Dr Clark says three out of four recover.

Treatment.

In the cure of this disease the attention of the practitioner, should be directed to the the means of procuring a speedy resolution, Here Bloodletting, stands at the head of the list, this should be repeated according

to the state of the pulse and other exerting circumstances, Dr Clark drew from 2 to 4 quart in forty eight hours and this in a hot West Indie climate, as this disease tends rapidly to suppuration & requires copious bleeding to cure it, Dr Rush in his Lectures mentions, a case of a Lady in this state of the disease, from whom he drew 150 ounces at fifteen bleedings, and though he saved her life yet he did not bleed sufficiently to prevent suppuration 2nd Purges as neutral salts castor oil &c. or what is better than them all, Calomel combined with Jalap, these should be frequently repeated, 3rd Nitre exhibited in 10 or 15 gr doses, from its power of lessening arterial action may be serviceable, But our principal dependance should be placed on the free and ~~the~~ liberal use of the lancet, aided by purges.

low diet, rest cool air &c Antimonials have been recommended and used in this disease, and from the sympathy which is known to exist between the liver and stomach, and their determination to the surface of the body, I can readily conceive they may be useful, by equalizing excitement, after the liberal use of those remedies enumerated and the system reduced to what Dr ~~Brown~~ has happily called the blistering point Blisters applied to the region of the liver will be found extremely serviceable in preventing suppuration. Dr Saunders recommends in strong terms, a quick succession of blisters. in preference to a long protracted discharge from a single vessication — The next remedy I shall mention, is the great dernier resort in almost all diseases

Namely Mercury. Mercury has been considered by some as specific in all affections of the liver, and has been exhibited indiscriminately, in the different states of this disease though a valuable medicine in the chronic state, it certainly must be pernicious in the acute, until the system is reduced. If Mercury be admissible in this state of the disease, it should be exhibited prior to the commencement of the suppurative action, this action once established according to Mr Hunters doctrine, Mercury would be of no kind of use. In spite of all our endeavours to produce a termination of this state of the disease in the great desideratum resolution, it sometimes descends into the chronic form, though this sometimes comes on gradually and almost imperceptibly, causing very little uneasiness

until some of the secondary consequences appear such as pain in the back part of the right shoulder, and sometimes in the left, sometimes a pain extending up the breast accompanied with a tickling cough, pain on applying the hand to the region of the liver, and frequently a degree of tumefaction may be discovered, when the fore part of the liver is affected, but when the back part it cannot be discovered by the hand, a yellow tinge on the skin and an inanimate appearance of the eyes, are indications of the existence of this disease

The Remedies for this state of the disease are 1st Bloodletting in small quantities, frequently repeated. 2nd Purges, of the drastic kind, but particularly extemporials, Calomel combined with

Jalap or Gamboge. It is in this form of of the disease, that Mercury is so advantageously used as a Salivant. It has been particularly recommended in the form of Unction, but for what reason, I do not know except it be from its acting less on the stomach and Bowels, as the the tendency of this state of the disease to terminate in Scirrhous, and permanent Obstruction of the liver, is so strong in some cases as not to be resisted, by a moderate mercurial action, the action of the mercury ought to be extended to salivation, and kept up a considerable time, in some cases that have resisted a single Salivation, have been cured by a second,

Nitric acid, from its powers of promoting the Operation of Mercury and

Obviating the Effects of mercurial irritation, promises to be a useful auxilliary in this State of the disease, with such views it is given in a dose of from one to two drachms largely diluted with water in the course of the day. The Juice of dandelion has been recommended and used in this state of the disease, but it appears to me that its powers are inconsiderable. after the system is reduced, the cure will be accelerated by the exhibition of Tonics as Columbo root Bark, Steel &c. with generous diet and gentle exercise in a Carriage or on Horse back.

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